

Have Rusk Testify, Senators Tell LBJ

By Robert C. Albright
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted yesterday to go over the head of Secretary of State Dean Rusk and ask the President to arrange for Rusk's appearance before the Committee to testify publicly on Vietnam.

The action was taken on motion of Sen. Karl E. Mundt (R-S.D.) following a running feud of nearly two years between Rusk and the Committee over the Secretary's unwillingness to testify publicly before the Senate unit on Southeast Asia policies.

Mundt's oral motion, approved 8 to 4, instructed Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) to invite the President to ask Rusk to appear at an "appropriate" time.

Mundt said that so far as he personally was concerned he would be willing to give assurances that Rusk would not be examined in public about ei-

ther North Korean seizure of the U.S. intelligence ship Pueblo or the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964, which stepped up the Vietnam war.

Only a short time after the Committee acted, Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), who proposed an almost identical motion last Nov. 29, underscored the request in a speech on the Senate floor.

Gore said that "one could only conclude from the circumstances" that the decision for Rusk not to testify in the past "was rendered by President Johnson."

In so doing, Gore went on to say, the President has elevated the disagreement to the level of a fundamental difference between the President and the Committee.

"I hope most profoundly that the President even at this late date will change his mind

See RUSK, A18, Col. 1

about the wisdom of permitting or directing... his Secretary to confer openly with the Committee," the Tennessee Democrat said.

"If he does not, however, I have no intention of letting a victory be won by the Executive Branch at the expense of the Senate without a contest."

Should the Administration persist in its refusal, Gore said he would bring a resolution to the Senate floor and seek to force a showdown on the "fundamental issues."

Gore concluded: "If the Senate does not recognize and challenge the Constitutional implications of the President's position, it will acquiesce in yet another expansion of executive power and another diminution of the people's elected representatives."

Mundt last year had opposed Gore's efforts to get Rusk before the Committee. But Mundt said yesterday that the Administration's "shifting positions" on Vietnam war policies, and in particular the appearance last weekend of Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara on a television news panel, had caused him to change his mind.

"Rusk did not hesitate to publicly answer questions on Vietnam policies in that broadcast," said Mundt. "If he can do that with reporters on TV, why can't he do it with mem-

bers of the Foreign Relations Committee?"

Mundt, like Gore, said he felt it was the President rather than Rusk who decided that the Secretary should appear before a television news panel and not before the more inquisitive Committee.

Sen. George D. Aiken (R-Vt.), who "abstained" from yesterday's Committee vote, told re-

porters he could understand why his colleagues were "ag-

gravated." He termed last Sunday's broadcast "largely favorable to the President's position."

Mundt, who has been considered a "hawk" on Vietnam war policies, said he still supports the war effort "but these constant changes in policy positions make my position difficult."

Gore also charged "confusion" on Vietnam war policies, which he said Rusk must clear

up. He demanded a "reassessment" of the U.S. position.

"Who among us is able to tell whether we are, or are not engaged in 'hot pursuit'?" asked Gore.

And he asked why it was that Mr. Johnson's San Antonio speech, hailed as a basis for Hanoi negotiations, "became a semantic puzzle which tied State Department officials in knots."